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Qualifications in Sport and Exercise Psychology: Reflections on the BPS qualification information day.

By Lauren Mawn

The BPS information day on the society's qualification in sport and exercise psychology (stage 2) was held at the BPS head office in Leicester on the 20th June 2011. The day was an opportunity for current and potential candidates to gain more information regarding what is required to attain HPC and BPS approved status as a chartered sport and exercise psychologist. The workshop was hosted by Dr Martin Eubank (Chief Supervisor) and Angie Cain (Qualifications officer) with presentations by Prof Dave Collins and Andrew Cruickshank offering a supervisor/candidate perspective. Below is a personal reflection and review of the information day provided by one of the attendees, Lauren Mawn.

The BPS stage two qualification is in its relative infancy and prior to attending the workshop I was quite confused about what was required from candidates enrolled on the programme. Further, I had gathered information from a number of sources (e.g., website, other students, supervisors) which seemed to lack clarity and congruency with regard to the qualification process. Therefore, my motivations for attending the workshop were threefold: 1) to address my specific questions, 2) to gain an understanding of how the qualification works, and 3) to find out what is required from candidates. I felt the workshop was planned in a way to ensure attendees got the most out of their attendance. In the first part of the day presenters covered information on the key role competencies, plans of training, submissions, and progression through to qualification. To enrol on the qualification candidates must have graduate membership of the Society with the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership (GBC) and either a society-accredited MSc in Sport and Exercise Psychology or completed Qualification in Sport and Exercise Psychology (stage 1) Examinations. Enrolment on the qualification requires the candidate to submit an enrolment form, a supervisory contract, a plan of training, an enhanced CRB disclosure, an equal opportunities form, a health reference form and an accreditation of existent competencies form (if applicable) all of which are available on the BPS website. The detailed explanation of the enrolment process clarified all misunderstandings that attendees may have had prior to the workshop.

Of particular interest in this part of the workshop was information regarding the option to have domain specific supervisors in addition to your lead supervisor to aid with personal development of particular competencies. I had not been previously aware of this and felt that this was a helpful and worthwhile option as working with supervisors from different areas of expertise would contribute to candidate development. Indeed, professional development was highlighted throughout and I felt that it was key to helping candidates view the qualification as a process rather than an outcome. All the presenters created a positive and relaxed environment where candidates felt that they could pose any question no matter how trivial, whilst a key discussion centred on the length of the qualification. The qualification must comprise of at least two years' full-time postgraduate experience (or its part-time

equivalent), totalling approximately 460 days. This includes at least 160 days of applied work, and up to 300 days of planning training activities, independent study, planning research, data collection, data analysis, and research writing.

In the second part of the workshop, a currently enrolled candidate and their supervisor provided attendees with a snap shot of the qualification process. I felt that these personal perspectives were one of the most worthwhile and informative parts of the day as it provided an opportunity to apply what we had learned in the morning to a personal qualification experience. Again with emphasis on the process, the supervisor and candidate detailed information regarding how they met and agreed to work towards the qualification, the approach they take to supervisor/supervisee relationship, and positives and pitfalls of the qualification, relationship and personal experience. Highlighted in this part of the workshop was the emphasis on CPD and the importance of additional courses (e.g., CBT, REBT) to compliment your experiences, whilst doing the qualification.

Whilst generally the workshop experience was positive and informative there are two things that I felt would have been helpful to be covered more comprehensively. First, I felt that the information regarding the assessment of the qualification was a bit rushed and therefore lacked the clarity that was achieved in the other sections. However, I recognise that this was a result of the presenters taking time to comprehensively answer candidates questions and therefore reduced the amount of time for this section. Secondly, I think it would be of great benefit to certain candidates to have the accreditation of existing competencies (ACE) explained more thoroughly. I understand that this information is only required by a handful of candidates, however, I felt that as it is quite complex perhaps it would have been beneficial if those interested were provided with extra time to cover this aspect of the qualification in more detail.

On reflection, the information day was primarily useful in informing attendees about the qualification process and helping candidates to decide the best time for them to enrol, given their own individual situation. Also, of great help was the diverse experience within in the workshop enhanced by different roles held by attendees. Ample time was provided for candidates to discuss with each other their specific backgrounds and questions they had regarding the qualification. In addition, engaging with other candidates was helpful to obtain ideas of how to improve competencies and to discuss current and future career plans.

Overall, I felt that the workshop was a worthwhile experience and I would recommend it to any potential candidates considering the qualification. I felt that the interactive question and answer format that predominated throughout was beneficial and helped me to clarify the incongruence that existed in any previous information I ascertained prior to the day. Furthermore, the emphasis on the process encouraged me to gain the best possible experience from ‘the doing’ of the qualification, in an effort to promote quality within the discipline.